

‘At the end of the decade - a global review of fish sustainability information schemes’

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**Fish Sustainability Information Group**



**Workshop on the future environmental  
labelling of seafood  
Copenhagen, January 2010**

# Fish Sustainability Information Group (2008)

## Full Members:

Seafish, UK

Fisheries Research and Development Corporation, Australia

The New Zealand Seafood Industry Council Ltd, New Zealand

Dutch Fish Product Board, Netherlands

Norwegian Seafood Export Council, Norway

BIM Irish Sea Fisheries Board, Ireland

**Associate Member:** Bundesverband der Deutschen Fischindustrie und des Fischgrosshandels e.V., Germany.

**Observer Member:** FAO

**Chair:** James A. Young, University of Stirling, Scotland

From 23/1/10 PDF at:

[http://www.marketing.stir.ac.uk/News/FSIG\\_Final\\_report\\_Jan2010.pdf](http://www.marketing.stir.ac.uk/News/FSIG_Final_report_Jan2010.pdf)

**Review study by:** 

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# The role of Fish Sustainability Information Schemes?

**Overarching aim:** Modify market demand for fish so as to support sustainability and benefit the environment

- Promote sustainable fisheries & aquaculture
- Engage public consciousness
- Enable informed consumer choice in seafood purchasing
- Promote improved catching and culture practices along the value chain for fish

# Why review the schemes?

## General Perception:

- lack of consistency between schemes
- some contradictory recommendations
- confused consumers: what's good & bad?
- confusion undermines the purpose of better communications about fish purchasing decisions
  - **Consumer uncertainty**



# Diverse positioning (value – high €quality) Increased product choice & complexity



# How to review the schemes ?

## Project Goals:

- Provide an objective assessment of certification schemes and recommendation lists (capture fisheries and aquaculture)
- Provide recommendations for future development & revisions





# Approach to the Review

- Web-based FSI&G conferences to agree scope & conduct
- Detailed review of 17 fish sustainability schemes plus supermarkets
- Synthesis of main findings & recommendations

**‘Top Retailer’  
for responsible  
fishing.  
Another award  
that didn’t slip  
through our net.**

We don't have to feed you a line about our fishing policy. We've just been named 'Top Retailer' for responsible fishing by Greenpeace for the second year running. That's because all M&S products, including our sandwiches and ready meals, only contain fish from well managed stocks. This ensures the species we catch, like Cornish Mackerel and Scottish Haddock will be around for generations to come. And we are also investing in restocking schemes with local fisheries. So with initiatives like these, you can rest assured, there really is nothing fishy about our fish.  
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# Benchmark

- *FAO Guidelines for the Ecolabelling of Fish and Fishery Products from Marine Capture Fisheries* (FAO, 2005)
- *Draft FAO Technical Guidelines on Aquaculture Certification* (FAO, 2008)



# Fish Sustainability Information Schemes: Segmentation:

|                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| <b>Certification<br/>Schemes</b> | Assess the status & characteristics of specific fisheries/aquaculture operations & may lead to the use of an ecolabel       |
| <b>Recommendation<br/>Lists</b>  | Provide consumers with an indication of sustainability of particular species via a traffic light or similar advisory system |





# Main Findings

- Substantive success in increasing awareness of sustainable fishing & aquaculture issues within a limited number of mainly developed country markets
- Compliance with FAO guidelines is seen as important & increasing
- Some scope for improvements
- (willingness to participate in the review was mostly high...disagreements limited –so far)

# Main Findings – cont.

Inconsistent approaches & contradictory advice:

- increasing consumer confusion
- increasing industry concern
- increasing retailer guardedness
- reduced confidence





# Main Findings – cont.

Improving the schemes: **7 Key attributes:**

- **Scope:** inclusion & comprehensive
- **Accuracy:** recent data & timetabled
- **Independence:** objective credibility
- **Precision:** specific units of application
- **Transparency:** verifiable
- **Standardisation:** LCD compliance plus...
- **Cost-effectiveness:** affordable & of value

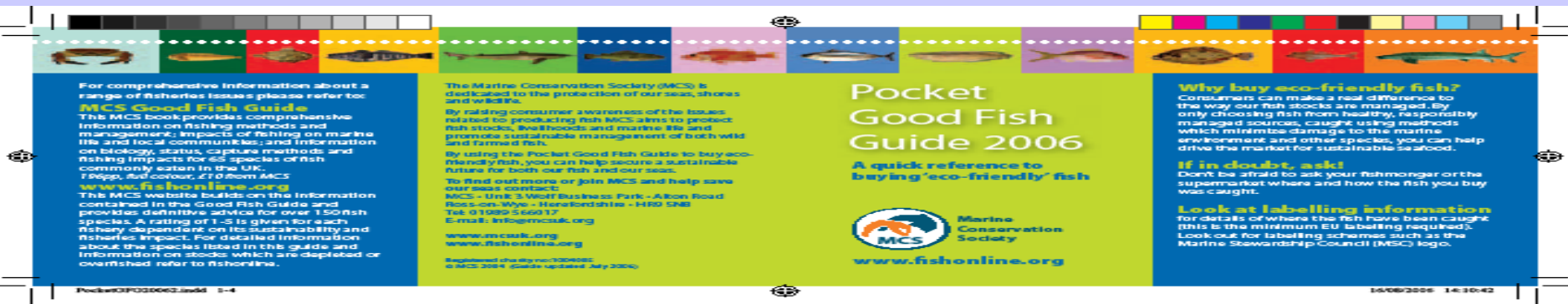
# Specific Findings: Certification Schemes

- Certification process often time consuming and costly
- Certification of developing world fisheries and aquaculture operations is less common than for developed countries
- Little standardisation between certification schemes, particularly for fisheries
- Generally apply only to fisheries / aquaculture facilities seeking certification: active & voluntary decision ?
- Main drive to improve sourcing policies has come from industry & primarily industry funded (+ some nationals)



# Specific Findings: Recommendation Lists

- Lists fill an important niche for consumers covering more species & products but only a few certified, labels
- 'No difficulty' covering fisheries in developing countries
- List producers may assess any product, with the option of 'red listing' those failing sustainability criteria
- Campaign priorities (e.g. a global ban on bottom trawling) are put ahead of fishery-specific, peer-reviewed outcomes & may proliferate through multiple lists.



# Specific Findings: A Comparison

- Some dual appearances on multiple lists & with certification & ecolabel but conflicting advice eg *Alaska pollock*, *NZ hoki*, *yellowfin tuna*, *NZ hoki*, *Chilean seabass*
- Certification schemes do not red-list fisheries or products
- Certification schemes assess a clearly defined unit of certification whereas Recommendation lists assess fish sourced from a region: May mask finer scale variations
- Certifications have a well defined timetable; Lists are more variable in currency and duration – lag effect?
- Decision making for lists is less accountable; assessment process is not decoupled from standard setting

# Recommendations

- Commitment to meet FAO guidelines; independent verification; complete aquaculture guidelines (imminent)
- Improve consistency: lists should better align outcomes with certification schemes
- Recognition of equivalence required – promote linkages
- Independent standard setting for recommendation lists
- Use only current and relevant data
- Adopt transparent updating procedure
- Information available for peer review



# Recommendations – cont.

- Retailers / foodservice take responsibility for selecting and promoting trustworthy schemes for their consumers
- Continue efforts to improve applicability to products from small-scale and data-deficient fisheries and aquaculture operations
- Develop market recognition associated with certification and labelling
- Encourage harmonisation of schemes through wider policy convergence: EU, FAO measures
- Incorporate emergent & increasingly complex measures (Social, ethical, LCA etc) whilst reducing confusion...

# Conclusion

- Consensus along the Value Chain of the importance of Fish Sustainability Information Schemes
- Strong commitment to sustainable fish supplies
- Key Challenge: enhance the contribution of the schemes to create, communicate and deliver yet more sustainable seafood consumption globally



A large group of fish, likely salmon, are swimming in turbulent, dark water. The fish are silvery and sleek, with some showing a hint of pink on their sides. They are moving in various directions, creating a sense of a large school or a migration. The water is dark and choppy, with many small ripples and bubbles. The overall scene is dynamic and captures a moment of intense movement in nature.

# Thank you

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# Lunch



HEREFORD  
STEIKRÚS

## WHALE MENU

### STARTER

*Lobster soup with Cognac*

### MAIN COURSE

*Whale peppersteak served with fried vegetables, potato and pepper sauce*

### DESSERT

*Icelandic Skyr Herefordstyle*

Price kr. 4.900

## PUFFIN MENU

### STARTER

*Smoked Puffin with fresh salad and raspberry vinegar*

### MAIN COURSE

*Grilled breast of Puffin served with fried vegetables, potato and mait sauce*

### DESSERT

*Icelandic Skyr Herefordstyle*

Price kr. 5.900